

K-State's top-10 moments this season



Head coach Bruce Weber and the K-State men's basketball team didn't envision a 12-11, 5-5 start to their season way back in November. Nonetheless, the shaky season so far hasn't been without highlights.

10. K-State nearly stuns No. 3 Arizona in Maui

This was an extremely important game early on for the Wildcats. K-State had rebounded with a win against Purdue in the first round of the Maui Invitational after a lackluster road loss to Long Beach State. Arizona entered a preseason favorite to win the Pac-12 title and be a force in the NCAA Tournament.

While there are no moral victories in sports — though that's something I would argue — K-State competed for 40 minutes against Arizona. The 72-68 loss was just that, a loss, but it was an early indicator that K-State could compete with anyone in the country.

9. Rohleder pumps up crowd with boost of energy off bench

Leave it to K-State's walk-on, mechanical engineer major to come off the bench and pump some energy into a game.

Brian Rohleder accounted for three-consecutive offensive charges against Savannah State, a game in which K-State started off sluggish and apathetic at best. After the third charge was called, Rohleder jumped up from off the ground, looked to the crowd and threw his hands up motioning for some life in Bramlage Coliseum.

K-State won that game 73-53. To date, Rohleder's celebration is still among the loudest moments the "Octagon of Doom"

has provided this season.

8. K-State's wheels nearly fall off wagon in loss to Oklahoma State

The Wildcats season could've ended on Jan. 3. In the eyes of many at the time, it had. K-State had dropped its third-straight loss in dismal fashion. Sophomore guard Marcus Foster was benched for attitude problems.

By all means, it's impressive the wheels didn't fall off on the season at that point.

7. Wildcats face another three-game losing streak after loss to Texas Tech

Falling to Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas isn't the worst thing in the world. Nationally-ranked Iowa State was stunned by the Red Raiders there just a few weeks back. Texas Tech may be down, but you can also count on Tubby Smith to have his team competing.

It wasn't the loss to the Red Raiders that hurt. Rather, the manner in which it happened proved most frustrating. Prior to Wednesday's game, K-State announced that Marcus Foster and Malek Harris were suspended for violating team rules. A game in which K-State needed their leading scorer and he was absent. Frustrating.

6. Weber's clipboard faces its demise against Jayhawks

Early on in K-State's loss to Kansas last Saturday, Weber was caught slamming his clipboard down in anger after a slow start from his team.

The poor clipboard never saw it coming!

5. Williams starts off 8-8 from field versus Oklahoma State

Sometimes when you're feeling it, you're feeling it. Essentially, that's how Nino Williams described his perfect 8-8 start against Oklahoma State. The senior forward was unstoppable from 10- to 15-feet, draining shot after shot as the Wildcats earned another victory and Williams a Big 12 Player of the Week honor.

4. Hurt doesn't care about the spread

Kids, let Stephen Hurt re-

mind you that you should never bet on sports.

K-State was picked lose by 11.5 points against Kansas. Those who took Kansas needed the Jayhawks to win by 12 points.

A lot of people took Kansas. The Jayhawks were well on their way to covering the spread before the most unsuspecting force decided to turn on his 3-point shooting abilities: Hurt.

Hurt drained back-to-back shots from behind the arc late in the game and K-State lost by just 11 points. Sorry, Vegas.

3. Iwundu's rim-rocking dunk energizes Sprint Center

Wesley Iwundu thought the overwhelming pro-K-State Sprint Center crowd needed to wake up.

He grabbed a rebound, went to coast to coast and threw down a vicious one-handed dunk. Mission accomplished. The crowd jumped to its feet and cranked up the noise as K-State topped Texas A&M right before conference play.

2. Foster's daggers stun ranked Oklahoma

Marcus Foster has hit clutch baskets several times in his K-State career. Against Oklahoma, he needed to make two for the Wildcats to secure a statement win.

He hit both. With the time running out in regulation, Foster nailed a pull-up jumper to send the game into overtime. Five minutes later, from nearly the same spot, Foster drained a 3-pointer with a hand in his face, as K-State ran away from Norman, Oklahoma with a win.

1. Bolden says 'NO!' to Southern Utah guard

By now, you've seen the play. A determined Southern Utah guard thought he could steal a K-State inbound pass and sneak by 6-foot-11-inch Brandon Bolden.

Bolden had other ideas in the form of swatting the layup out of the gym. The play was good enough to garner millions of hits on Vine and elsewhere on social media.

Tate Steinlage is a junior in mass communications. Please send comments to sports@kstatecollegian.com.

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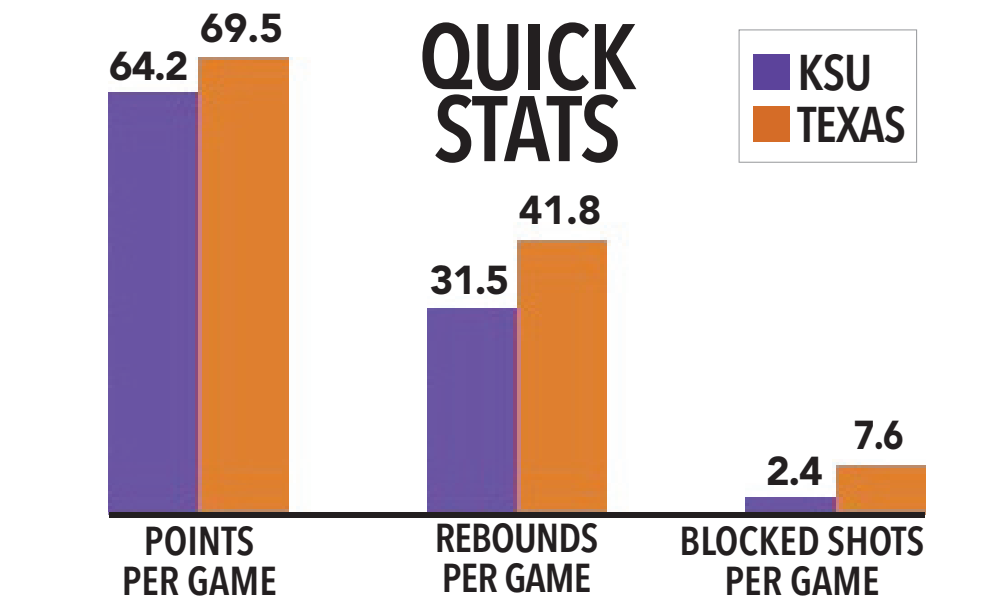
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K-STATE VS. NO. 25 TEXAS

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TOP SCORING PLAYERS			
2	Marcus Foster	1	Isaiah Taylor
	14.0 PPG		13.8 PPG
42	Thomas Gipson	5	Jonathan Holmes
	11.4 PPG		11.5 PPG
11	Nino Williams	1	Myles Turner
	11.0 PPG		11.2 PPG

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K-State looks to stop the bleeding against struggling No. 25 Texas



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Sophomore forward **Wesley Iwundu** and the rest of the K-State bench celebrate following a layup by senior forward Nino Williams with 20 seconds left in the second half of the Wildcats' 63-53 defeat of the Cowboys on Jan. 24 in Bramlage Coliseum.

By TIMOTHY EVERSON
THE COLLEGIAN

The Eyes of Texas," as the Longhorn fight song proclaims, are upon No. 25 Texas, as the visitors from Austin take a four-game losing streak into Manhattan on Saturday.

The Wildcats' (12-11, 5-5) aren't faring much better, though, sporting their own three-game losing streak that culminated Wednesday in a loss to then bottom-of-the-league foe Texas Tech.

Needless to say, the loss wasn't the worst thing that happened to K-State Wednesday. Prior to tipoff, head coach Bruce Weber announced in a press release that sophomore guard Marcus Foster and freshman forward Malek Harris were suspended for a violation of team rules.

"Our whole team, we have been plagued from the start of the season by immaturity, by a lack of discipline and a lack of consistency," Weber said after Wednesday's loss. "That has been on and off the court all year."

Weber is unsure whether or not the two will be available for Saturday's contest.

"Hopefully they will learn from this experience and make the necessary progress to rejoin our team," Weber added in the press

release. Without Foster, the team loses a consistent scorer. Foster is averaging a team-leading 14 points and was the Wildcats' main threat from behind the 3-point line.

In the absence of Harris, K-State loses a consistent defender who has given the team valuable bench minutes with senior forward Nino Williams still banged up from injuries inflicted during the West Virginia game.

Even if Foster and Harris are available, the Longhorns will be a difficult obstacle for K-State.

Texas is led in scoring by sophomore guard Isaiah Taylor averaging 13.8 points per game. The Longhorns also rank fourth in the country rebounding the ball, averaging 41.8 game.

They are able to accomplish that with height on their team in players like 6-foot-11-inch freshman forward Myles Turner, 6-foot-9-inch senior center Cameron Ridley and 6-foot-8-inch senior forward Jonathan Holmes.

"I have no doubt in the group of guys we have here," Texas head coach Rick Barnes told the media after Wednesday's overtime loss to Oklahoma State. "What it goes back to is the fine line with execution. All five guys have to be playing together. All five guys have to be fluid. We talked yesterday about what we were going to run to start the game and that I can't explain."

In Wednesday's post-game radio interview with K-State Sports, Weber said that he expects Texas (14-8, 3-6) to defend the Wildcats in a zone defense like many in the league have done successfully.

If Foster is out on Saturday, it will be critical for K-State to find a consistent shooter from behind the arc to try and break that zone.

In the second half against Texas Tech, it was freshman guard Tre Harris who hit three treys that brought K-State within one point. Whomever the scoring comes from, K-State will have to consistently score from outside, because Texas will be very hard to drive against to generate points in the paint.

K-State will also have to avoid five minute periods of not scoring, which it has a propensity to do, as well as a slow start to begin the game, which has plagued the offense and led to multiple poor first halves.

However, as inept as K-State's offense has been, Texas has been just as bad. The Wildcats rank 113th in the country averaging 44.7 percent shooting from the field. Meanwhile, Texas averages 43.5 percent, which drops them to 180th in the country.

Texas will face K-State in front of a blackout, as the Wildcats are encouraging fans to dress in their black K-State apparel. Tipoff from Bramlage Coliseum is 3 p.m.

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What you need to know before Saturday



TATE STEINLAGE
THE COLLEGIAN

K-State hasn't been doing all that good as of late. Thankfully for the Wildcats, neither has Texas.

Whereas K-State has dropped three-straight games and dealing with suspensions, Texas — preseason favorites to challenge Kansas at the top of the Big 12 conference — have lost four-straight games and are positioned eighth in the standings.

The two meet Saturday at Bramlage Coliseum looking to rectify their recent forms. Here's how the two teams matchup and who has the advantage where.

Front court: Texas

The Longhorns' season may not quite be as they envisioned it, but their post play certainly has. Three of Texas' top-five scorers are forwards. The trio includes a senior, freshman and junior — all big bodies who are able to score inside and grab rebounds.

K-State is a smaller team inside, even with Stephen Hurt and Brandon Bolden in the mix. The Wildcats have struggled to adequately get the ball down low and attack the rim against taller opposition. Texas will be the toughest foe in this regard, so expect the Longhorns to have a clear advantage in the front court Saturday.

Back court: Texas

The back court was a toss up before Wednesday's announcement that Marcus Foster and Malek Harris were suspended for violating team rules. Without Foster, K-State is lost offensively. Wildcats head coach Bruce Weber doesn't seem all that optimistic that Foster will be available Saturday, which doesn't bode well for K-State's chances.

Texas hasn't been superb in the front court this season, but sophomore guard Isaiah Taylor and junior guard Javan Felix have been a solid duo averaging 13.8 and 10.2 points per game, respectively.

Even with Foster, K-State's attention to the big men down low should leave Longhorn



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Junior guard **Justin Edwards** goes for a layup in the first half of the Wildcats' 57-68 loss to the No. 9-ranked Jayhawks in the first installment of the Sunflower Showdown on Jan. 31 at Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence.

shooters open all afternoon. That's a clear advantage for the visitors from Austin.

K-State X-Factor: Nino Williams

K-State often succeeds against taller teams because Nino Williams has the ability to pull defenders out of the paint with his deadly 10- to 15-foot shot. Unfortunately for K-State, Williams has struggled since injuring his knee against West Virginia last week. That has allowed teams to sag off a bit and key in on senior forward Thomas Gipson.

If K-State hopes to knock off Texas Saturday, Williams will need to return to form and have himself another big day, especially if Foster and Harris remain suspended. If he's able to hit a few mid-range shots early on, Texas will be forced to step out of the paint, which should free up Gipson down low for some easy looks.

Texas X-Factor: Demarcus Holland

Demarcus Holland's junior campaign has been good, even great at times. Holland is aver-

aging 7.4 points, 3.7 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game. Quality production from a player who isn't in the limelight.

The problem is, Holland has disappeared several times this season.

Against Oklahoma State Wednesday, Holland went 4-4 from behind the arc to complement his 14 points. In the five games prior, Holland averaged just 3.8 points per game.

Texas has the tools inside to get the job done. It will need its full compliment of players playing at their best, however, around the perimeter to down K-State on the road. That includes Holland.

Matchup to watch: Thomas Gipson vs. Cameron Ridley

The height advantage goes to Ridley, but the physique advantage is all Gipson. This one could be like watching two rocks attempting to move each other, but that's all the fun, isn't it?

Tate Steinlage is a junior in mass communications. Please send all comments to sports@kstatecollegian.com.

The Nino effect: Wildcats' key to success



EMILIO RIVERA
THE COLLEGIAN

Every team in college basketball has their signature players — players that could transfer to dozens of schools across the country and still make an immediate impact.

For K-State, that player is their sophomore guard who can score anywhere from the floor: Marcus Foster. Averaging 14 points per game, Foster is one of the most lethal scorers in the Big 12, especially when you factor in his ability to shoot the long ball, averaging nearly 40 percent from behind the arc this season.

Foster is performing well and has been doing everything in his power to get his team in the win column, minus Wednesday's suspension. Even so, K-State is struggling. Something clearly is not right.

As Kareem Abdul-Jabbar eloquently once said, "One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team, but one man cannot make a team."

Foster has indeed been a crucial ingredient, but he hasn't been able to elevate the play of his teammates — especially K-State's guards, who have struggled mightily at times this season.

For the Wildcats, only one player has been able to make everyone better around him: senior forward Nino Williams.

Williams, who Weber refers to as the "old man" of the group, may look exactly like that old man at times, hobbling and wobbling up and down the court. But when he's playing to his potential, Williams makes the Wildcats as competitive as any team in the conference.

Williams creates matchup nightmares for any team, because his 10- to 15-foot shot — rarely in this new age of basketball that Williams connects on over 50 percent of the time — allows K-State to function by spacing the floor for its guards and senior forward Thomas Gipson down low.

It's well-known throughout the conference that the Wildcats heavily depend on Gipson to either grind in the paint or pass it out so the guards can rotate the ball.

But something that isn't as well-known is that when Williams isn't on the floor, it's easier for teams to double- (even triple-) team Gipson down low. Williams draws the help-side defense away from Gipson, which puts him in better opportunities to score down low.

When Williams is on the floor and is healthy, the difference is noticeable. The Wildcats' ability to pass and swing the ball side to side is night and day different.

There's a reason why Williams is the only Wildcat to have won Big 12 Player of the Week honors twice this season. In fact, he's the first to have won it multiple times in the same season since Rodney

McGruder did it four times in 2012-13.

In the three games before he injured his knee against West Virginia, Williams took over games, averaging 20 points, 7.3 rebounds and shooting 10-10 from the charity stripe — something that cannot be overlooked on this roster.

Since the injury, Williams' team appears to be searching for an identity. They look lost trying to replicate the "Nino Effect" by having players like junior forward Stephen Hurt try to get into a rhythm of sinking shots, which has worked at times, but isn't as consistent as the senior forward.

Simply put, the Wildcats don't have a player to replace Williams.

Williams is the true key to K-State's success. If he doesn't climb out of the hole that he's found himself in soon and catch a break with his knees, the Wildcats could be dead in the water, and could be a team destined to be knocked out early in the tournament — the National Invitational Tournament.

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PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Senior forward **Nino Williams** tries to break away from Kansas forward **Perry Ellis** to receive an inbound pass in the first half of the Wildcats' 57-68 loss to the No. 9-ranked Jayhawks in the first installment of the Sunflower Showdown Jan. 31 at Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence.

PICK 'EM

WEEK 3

The crew lines up to pick the winners and losers of the week

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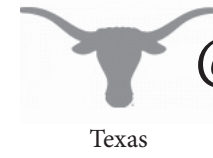
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Wyatt Thompson

Voice of the Wildcats

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